Contra Costa County Historical Society

BULLETIN

POST OFFICE BOX 190 FEBRUARY 15, 1972 MARTINEZ, CALIFORNIA

Civilized Man's First Visit to Contra Costa Is Subject of All Societies March 9 Meeting

Artist's visualization of the Portola expedition — with which Captain Gages traveled — as it reached San Diego from Baja California. Portola marched under orders to establish missions and a presidio in Alta California.

How 16 intrepid men made the first exploration of Contra Costa County 200 years ago will be the subject of a lively historical evening on March 9th for all history buffs in the County, hosted by our Society. The memorable trek through what is now Contra Costa County by Captain Pedro Fages and Fray Juan Crespi and their escort will be told by the Rev. John B. McGloin, S.J., professor of California history at the University of San Francisco.

Because of the timeliness of the topic on the bicentennial of Fages' visit, President A. Frank Bray said that all historical societies in the County — many of them located in the route of the exploration party — are being invited to attend the meeting.

Fages' name may be ranked second in glory only to Gaspar de Portola, the governor of Baja California who organized the 1769 expedition to settle Alta California with a mission at San Diego and another at Monterey with a presidio. Spain had been alerted to the incursion of the Russians on the American northwest coast and ordered the occupation of the country and civilizing of the Indians through its well-tested mission system.

Portola, Fray Junipero Serra and the main body of the expedition trudged up the sere, bleak trail of Baja California, while Fages was dispatched in the packetboat **San Carlos,** in command of 25 Catalan volunteers. At San Diego, after the initial phase of a settlement was underway, Portola led an expedition of 74 persons and 163 mules on the long march to Monterey. Through confusion and misunderstanding of ocean charts, the party proceeded all the way to San Francisco Bay without being quite sure where they were or what they had found. Not until the following year, 1770, when the mission at Monterey was founded after Portola returned with another expedition, was the significance of San Francisco Bay realized.

But, even then its vast scope was a mystery, and Fages, now commandante at Monterey, determined to find a way across the Bay to establish a northernmost mission. In 1771, he led an exploration party up the east shore just short of the Carquinez Strait, and returned in disappointment. The next year he retraced his steps with 14 soldiers, a muleteer, an Indian servant and Fray Crespi, passed through the Strait and reached a point nearly at present-day Antioch.

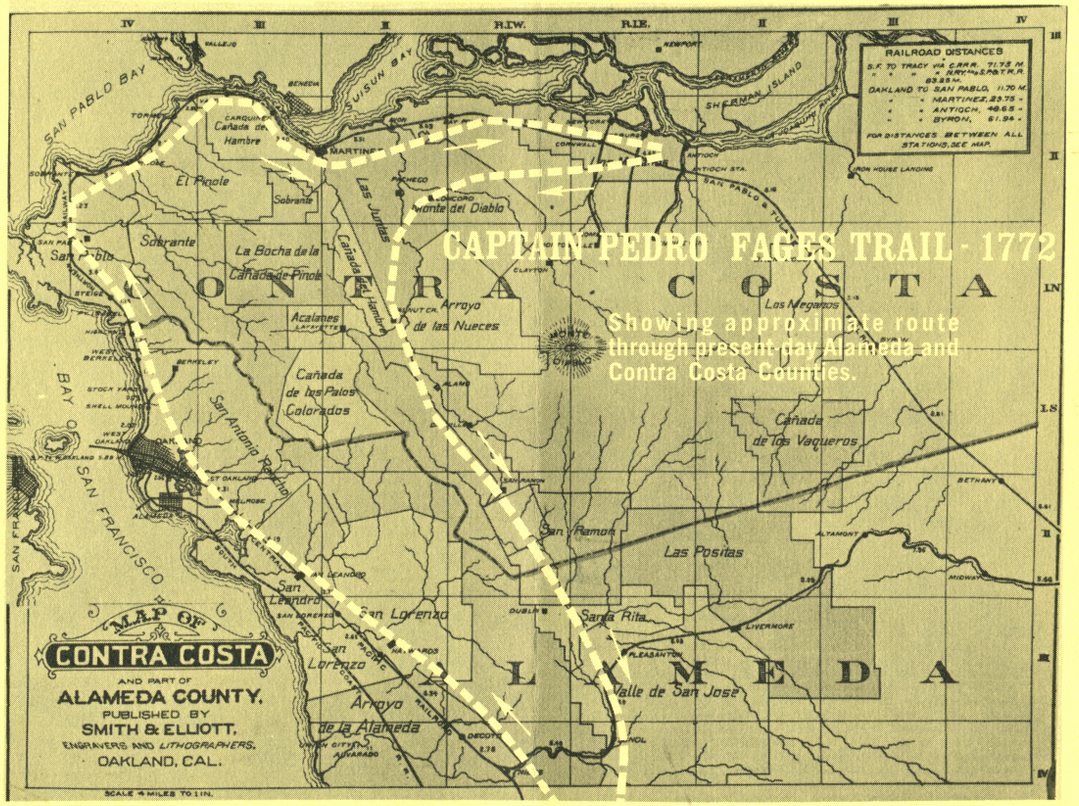
Here he was ordered to return to San Diego by a cadre of soldiers who had dogged his steps all the way from Monterey. For the return journey Fages chose a shortcut around the northern base of Mt. Diablo, through what is now Concord and Walnut Creek, then south through San Ramon Valley. The party's last campsite was March 31, 1772, near Danville.

FAGES HISTORICAL MARKER IS SET FOR SAN RAMON VALLEY

Commemorating the last section of the Captain Pedro Fages trail through Contra Costa County, will be the dedication of a California Registered Landmark at the Sunset Nursery, Danville, on April 1st.

Plans are now being drawn for a reenactment of a portion of the Fages trek and public ceremonies to dedicate the bronze plaque and marker, sponsored by the San Ramon Valley Historical Society.

The general public is invited. Details are to be reported in the press.



Rev. McGloin Famed as Historical Author

Our guest speaker, who last addressed our Society in 1966, has taught for over 20 years at the University of San Francisco. He is a noted authority on the Catholic Church in California history. Numerous articles in scholarly journals, including the California Historical Society **Quarterly** bear his name.

His books include **Eloquent Indians: The Life of James Bouchard, California Jesuit,** and **California's Pioneer Archbishop: The Life of Joseph Alemany, O.P., 1814-1888.** A new work, **Jesuits by the Golden Gate: the Society of Jesus in San Francisco, 1849-1969,** is soon to be off the press.

FAGES VIEW NEAR ANTIOCH

Society Vice President Louis L. Stein recently inspected site overlooking the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, where the land view is little changed from time of Fages expedition. This place is about a half-mile west of Antioch.

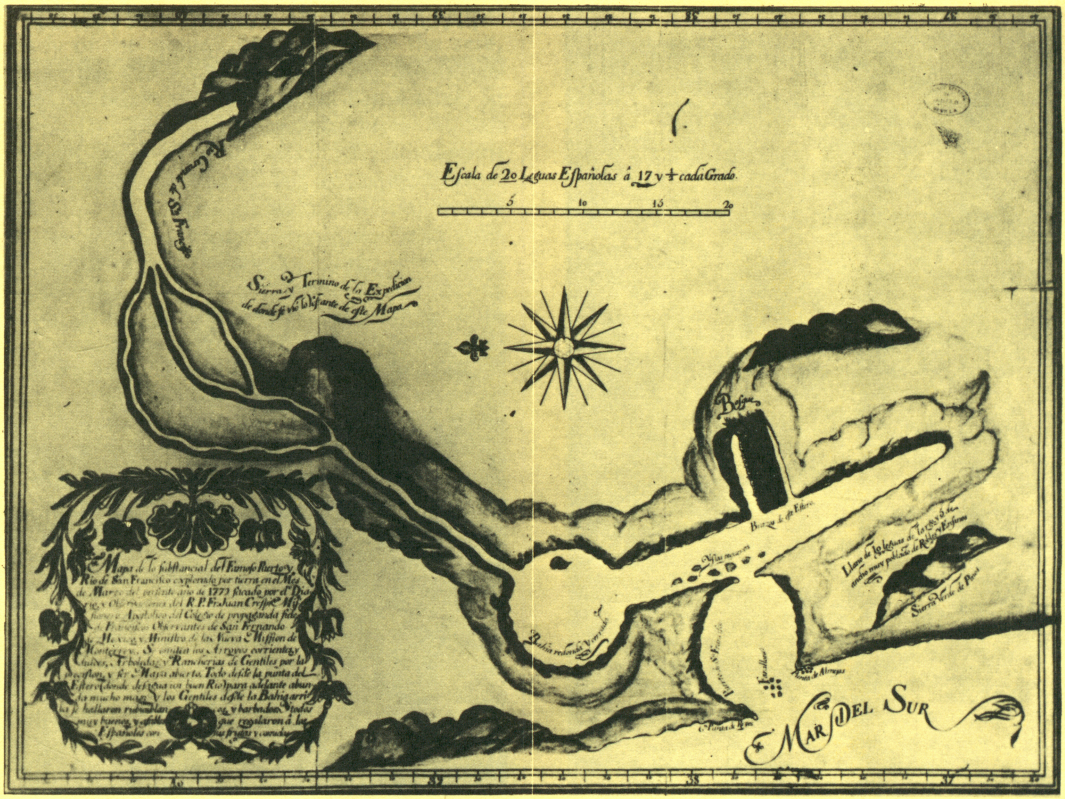
LOUIS STEIN IS PICKED AS ALAMEDA SOCIETY PREXY

Louis Stein, our Society's first vice president was installed as president of the Alameda County Historical Society on February 10th, at the organization's Fifth Annual Dinner.

He succeeds Judge John S. Cooper, retiring president.

The changeover occurred at the Lake Merritt Hotel where society members heard an informative presentation, "The World of Jack London."

Stein is one of the founders of the Alameda society.



Map of San Francisco Bay drawn by Fray Crespi, diarist in Fages' party.

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MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DINNER & PROGRAM

Speaker: Rev. J. B. McGloin, S.J.

Date: March 9, 1972

Place: Red Rooster Restaurant
Ygnacio Valley &
Oak Grove Rd.
Walnut Creek

Time: 6:30 p.m.
No-Host Cocktails

Dinner: 7:00 p.m.,
$5.50 per person

Reservations: To J. B. Jory, Sect'y
P.O. Box 190
Martinez, CA 94554

COME ONE! COME ALL!